

SOME WASHINGTON BIRD NOTES.

BY DR. R. W. SHUFELDT.

For the past seven years, and more, I have been residing in the city of New York, engaged upon special art and medical work which afforded me but little opportunity to see much of the birds anywhere. Prior to that time I had been living in Washington, D. C., where both autumnal and vernal migrations were always carefully studied by me for miles about, and there was no question in my mind, the last few years that I was here, as to the fact that both land and water birds were rapidly decreasing in numbers. Some species were rarely or ever seen, either in the spring or in the fall. Several papers were published by me on the subject, and some of the probable causes for the falling off given, one of which I remember was the killing by boys by means of an air-gun which was very popular at the time with them. Recently I have returned to Washington to live and taken a home within three or four minutes walk of the Zoological Garden (3356 18th St.). It is practically surrounded by open country and extensive tracts of heavy timber. After becoming settled, which required several weeks, I discovered that Mr. Robert Ridgway owned his home across the street, and was at the time away on a vacation in the west.

The spring migration of birds had just about commenced, and it was not long before I made very early morning visits to the neighboring woods to note what species were here and especially as regards their abundance (April 10, May 12). Judging from the chorus that saluted my ears before arriving, they had not been wiped out altogether, and as I had not had such a treat for many years, my feelings may be easily imagined by any thorough-going ornithologist who has ever been submitted to a similar term of starvation of that character.

Great was my delight when I discovered that a very marked change had taken place during my years of absence, for not only had birds become numerous again, but were evidently

less wary, and an unusual increase had taken place in some species. For instance, judging from my own personal observation, such a bird as the Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), ten years ago was one of the most uncommon species to be taken in the District of Columbia anywhere. The other morning when I was out (May 13, '09) I counted twelve of these beautiful birds in a short walk of a little less than five miles, and heard others calling in the distance. Cardinal Grosbeaks (*C. cardinalis*) were very abundant and the males in beautiful plumage, while in a beech tree close to my home there was a flock numbering over an hundred Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus*). All the common birds were in full force, such as Robins, Brown Thrashers, Catbirds, Flickers, and any number of others. What interested me more than anything else was to observe the abundance of warblers that were on. They were not as plenty as I used to see them forty-five years ago, but they were nevertheless very largely represented.

In one straggling troop that were feeding as they passed through some large and adjacent trees, I noted several pairs of Blackburnians (*D. blackburniae*), ditto Black-throated Blues and Greens (*D. carulescens*, *D. virens*), also many Parulas, Cape Mays, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Blackpolls, with numerous others, and one Cerulean (*D. cerulea*). In other parts of the woods and along the roadside they were equally abundant, and associated with still other species. (There is a pair of superb Red-headed Woodpeckers within thirty feet from my study window as I write these lines and they are nesting not over that many yards from my table.)

In a few days I shall look up the Water Birds, and hope to meet with an equally gratifying state of affairs in their case. Later on in conversation with a number of the best authorities and observers who have paid attention to the ornithology of the District of Columbia for many years, I was pleased to learn that the facts set forth in this brief communication were quite true.